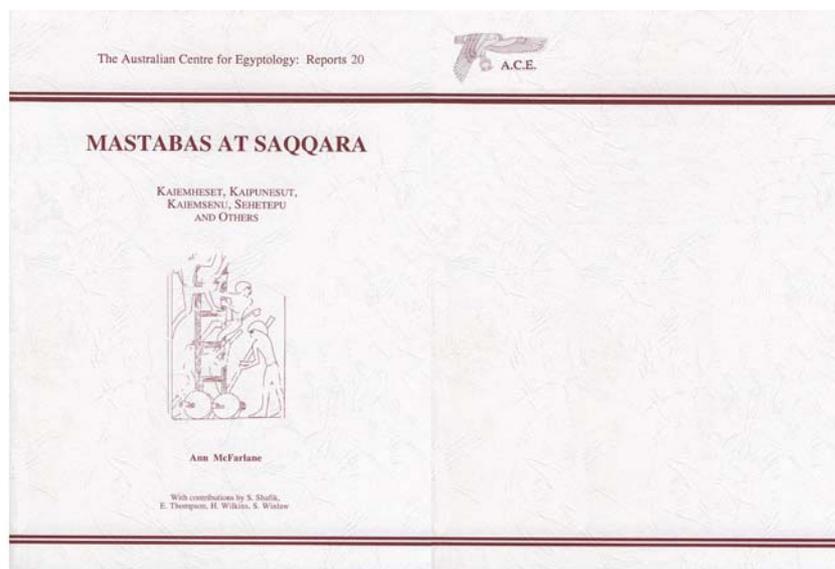


McFarlane, A. 2004. Mastabas at Saqqara. Kaiemheset, Kaipunesut, Kaiemsenu, Sehetepu and others. – Oxford, Aris and Phillips (The Australian Centre for Egyptology Reports 20)

Book review by V. Chauvet



The 20th report of the Australian Centre for Egyptology published by Ann McFarlane features two multi-burial family complexes located immediately to the west of the funerary complex of Teti at Saqqara. The monuments were named after the owners of the largest, most decorated tombs, Kaiemheset and Kaiemsenu. The location of Kaiemheset's chapel at the southeast corner of the mastaba is an indication of his prominence vis-à-vis the other occupants of the complex. The construction sequence further establishes that he is the one who initiated the construction of this family tomb. The second monument was the burial ground of at least five individuals. The chapel of Kaiemsenu is not only the largest, its walls and façade are lined with decorated limestone blocks. The central location of this chapel is unusual, all the more so since the construction of the mastaba apparently proceeded from south to north.

The discovery of these two mastabas in the early 20th century was a by-product of the work carried out by Quibell, Hayter, Firth and Gunn at the site of the royal pyramid.¹ Little attention was then paid to the monuments – mudbrick constructions – which were superficially published. The excellent craftsmanship of the finds – a series of wooden and limestone statues, decorated limestone slabs from the chapel of Kaiemsenu – was however evident and the artefacts were dispatched to the Cairo Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Although standing prominently in the Old Kingdom galleries of both museums, these objects have received only punctual attention and a complete publication of the ensemble is long overdue. Issues raised about the date of the tomb of Kaiemheset based on stylistic grounds have made the re-evaluation of the monument as a whole all the more necessary. Finally, the epigraphic material, in particular a series of dedicatory inscriptions recording the involvement of the son(s) in the making of their father's burial, have until recently received little attention (Chauvet, 2004). The possibility to re-excavate the tombs in order to provide a secure archaeological context for the study of the objects, and an updated record of the structural and architectural features of the monument make McFarlane's 'Mastabas at Saqqara' a highly anticipated publication.

The structure of the book follows the well-established model of other ACE Reports. The presentation of every tomb in both complexes is divided into distinct sections. The first part lists the names and titles of the tomb owner, his relatives and dependants, with references to the relevant literature. Often the provenance of the information within the tomb (specific walls or scenes) or the associated material (statues, inscribed objects) is specified, which greatly facilitates the reader's evaluation of the material. Part 2 presents an annotated review of the dating criteria for the monuments, followed by a 'suggested date' at the end. In part 3 we find a detailed description of the architectural features of the tombs which complement the 'brick-by-brick' plans and sections provided at the end of the volume (pls. 40–41 (Kaiemheset), pls. 57–58 (Kaiemsenu)). Though tedious, the reading of this section provides the interested reader with all the structural information required to understand

¹ For Kaiemheset see Quibell & Hayter (1927: 16–20) and for Kaiemsenu see Firth & Gunn (1926: 31–36, 157–166).

the construction sequence of the monuments. The description of the burial apartments and associated finds is presented separately in section 5.

Any preserved element of decoration is described in the next section and includes the transliteration and translation of all inscriptions, even the most fragmentary ones which may not be clearly visible in the reproductions. All the scenes are illustrated by photographs and line tracings. The desire of the author to provide as much visual support as possible is commendable, even if the black-and-white photographs do not offer enough contrast to see the details. The absence of colour illustration is unfortunate since the publication includes discussions of the colour conventions wherever polychromic pigments are still visible (p. 35–37 (Kaiemheset); p. 84–87 (Kaiemsenu); p. 94–95 (Sehetepu I)). From those minute studies, McFarlane identifies combination patterns and lists hieroglyphs by colour-groups (polychrome, red, yellow, green, blue, black and white). The purpose of the ‘colour conventions’ sections remains somewhat unclear. McFarlane does not elaborate on the meaning of the data she provides, namely whether the identified patterns testify to the overall uniformity of the decoration technique or on the contrary to some heterogeneity related to the work of different hands, different artists. The description does not either include references to Munsell’s colour coding system (or any similar colour codification) thus making the data unsuitable for comparison with other monuments.

The last section deals with the finds. For most part, the objects described come from the original excavation. A conscious choice was made not to include material ‘presumably of later date’ found in the tomb; thus the model boats (JE 63184–193, Poujade, 1948) discovered “at the mouth of the shaft” of Sehetepu I are mentioned (p. 92) but not presented or even listed in the ‘finds’-section of the tomb. New material coming from the 2000–2003 clearance – essentially pottery – has been added.

The issue of dating

The presence of several 5th Dynasty royal names in the titles of Kaiemsenu (p. 67) – wab-priest of Sahura, priest of Neferirkara, priest of the pyramid of Neuserra – and of his father Sehetepu I (p. 90) – wab-priest of the pyramid of Sahura, priest of Neferirkara – gives an unquestionable *terminus postquem non* (during or after the reign) of Neuserra. Moreover, the discovery of a sealing of Djedkara-Isesi in an undisturbed burial cut in the floor of Anonymous tomb II, secures a *terminus antequem* of Isesi for the building, thus limiting the overall chronological bracket for the construction of this tomb to mid-Neuserra-early Isesi (p. 72).

The absence of royal names in the complex of Kaiemheset, on the other hand, has opened the range of dates from the 4th to the 6th Dynasties. The proximity of the tomb to the pyramid complex of Teti has, in the past, been a leading factor in considering it contemporary to the reign of this king. However, the stylistic analysis of Nadine Cherpion (1989: 112–115), which reassigned the monument to the 4th Dynasty, has greatly impacted the discussion in recent years. McFarlane’s discussion is very useful in that it is not limited to any single factor but reviews all the material which might contribute data helping narrowing down the chronological range: stylistic criteria, architecture, location and titles (p. 19–23).

Stylistic criteria

Of the six elements discussed by Cherpion (1989: 112–115), only one – the wig “à diminution” (criterion 30) – would require the mastaba of Kaiemheset to be no later than the reign of Djedefra in the 4th Dynasty: “the last royal name [associated with criterion 30] is that of Djedefra, [thus] the mastaba of Kaiemheset is not posterior to this king”. (*ibidem*: 114). Other elements such as Cherpion’s relating Kaiemheset’s juvenile and serene face to types frequent in the 4th Dynasty are, to her own acknowledgement, based on her intimate knowledge of Old Kingdom private art (Cherpion, 1989: 115, no parallels are cited). As for the panelled façade plastered and painted in imitation of wooden mats “reminiscent of Hesire” (*ibidem*: 114), parallels are found in several monuments securely dated to the late 5th – early 6th Dynasty, such as G2184 (p. 20 and n. 42). All the other criteria discussed by Cherpion have a periodicity which extends into the 5th Dynasty (Sahura, Neuserra). The issue thus becomes the prevalence of Cherpion’s *terminus ante quem non*, according to which the latest royal name written on a monument establishes statistically the time *until which* a stylistic criterion was used (Baud, 1998: 32).

Wisely, McFarlane does not attempt to address this specific, highly controversial, methodological issue. Instead, she focuses on demonstrating that many stylistic and thematic features – such as the scene of Egyptian troops attacking foreigners within a walled tomb (p. 21) – are frequently paralleled in tombs of the 5th and early 6th Dynasty: 1) chairs with bull’s legs – Cherpion’s criterion 10 – is attested up to the reign of Pepy I; 2) the rounded cushion at the back – Cherpion’s criterion 3 – is attested up to the reign of Neuserra. On a few occasions McFarlane directly refutes Cherpion’s argument for a date in the 4th Dynasty, as in the case of back slab supports which she argues are found on both standing and seated statues from the 4th to the 6th Dynasty (p. 57, n. 22). Otherwise she calls for caution, noting that some of Cherpion’s criteria have parallels which are “elsewhere

placed, in a broader perspective, to Dynasty 5” (p. 22, n. 61). Finally, McFarlane pays specific attention to stylistic features which, though archaic (the umbel on the chair projecting in front of the tomb-owner) or attested as early as the 4th Dynasty (short hair exposing the ear on the statue of Kaipunesut MMA 26.2.7), remain in use in the late 5th Dynasty at Saqqara. Her observations suggest that instead of being ‘early’ the style of Kaiemheset’s material might show archaizing and/or geographically localized features.

Here is not the place to verify if all the parallels quoted by McFarlane have a secure date. She expresses reservations concerning Junker’s dating of the mastaba of Ijw to the end of the Old Kingdom (p. 21, n. 47) and similar concerns should be raised towards the dates of parallels from Lepsius’ ‘Denkmäler’ or Borchardt’s ‘Statuen’. Regardless, McFarlane makes a convincing argument that the stylistic evidence pointing to the 5th Dynasty outweighs any criterion specifically limited to the 4th Dynasty.

Architecture

McFarlane repeatedly underlines the difference between the architecture of the mastabas of Kaiemheset and Kaiemsenu and the tombs in the Teti cemetery “which suggests an earlier date” (p. 7). Her main argument is that it would be unlikely for upper middle-class officials to have tombs equal to or larger in size than those of Teti’s viziers “if they were contemporaries” (p. 20). She follows here Kanawati’s long-standing argument that the size of the mastabas *alone* can be used to establish either the standing of an official or a precise chronological sequence (Kanawati, 1977). It has long been noted that the assumption of a strict correlation between the size of a tomb and the status of its owner presumes that all officials would devote the same percentage of their resources to the construction of their funerary monument (Strudwick, 1985: 5–6). Moreover, this line of thought does not take into consideration the quality of the tomb construction. The use of mudbrick, for instance, is a cost-efficient means for officials to build large tombs at lesser cost. Finally, the use of mudbrick imposes structural limitations which do not allow the construction of multi-rooms complexes thus making any conclusion based on a strict architectural comparison between the mastabas of Kaiemheset/Kaiemsenu and the stone monuments of Mereruka, Kagemni and Ankhmahor of little relevance.

On the contrary, the comparisons drawn with the “smaller brick tombs of lesser officials who served Teti and Pepy II” (p. 20) are to the point. The monuments of Kaiemheset and Kaiemsenu, consisting of a large mudbrick mastaba with several modified cruciform chapels, and in the case of Kaiemheset an entrance pillared hall, find no parallel in the Teti cemetery. Another very relevant piece of evidence provided by McFarlane is the difference in the size of the bricks which distinguishes those two monuments from those in the Teti cemetery (p. 13, 65). The impact of that argument is unfortunately diminished by the lack of comparative data. Much information has been gathered in this regard by the work of the ACE in the Teti cemetery since the publication of Spencer (1979), the only reference given by McFarlane.

The absence in this section of a comparative analysis of the architecture of the tombs of Kaiemheset with that of Kaiemsenu is noteworthy. One of the most serious objections to a date in the 4th Dynasty for the mastaba of Kaiemheset is the lack of consideration given to the architectural similarities, which it shares with the monuments of Kaiemsenu and which is securely dated to the late 5th Dynasty (Kanawati, 1992). Kanawati’s personal observation that both tombs were constructed with “exactly the same type of mudbrick” (Kanawati 1992: 326) is mitigated by McFarlane’s notation that the bricks used in the construction of the mastaba of Kaiemsenu “are not as big as those employed by Kaiemheset” (p. 70).

Location

The most compelling argument that the complex of Kaiemheset is contemporary to Kaiemsenu, and thus no earlier than the reign of Neusera and that both monuments predate the construction of the Teti cemetery, comes from the discussion of the location of the tombs.

The excavation work carried out by the ACE between 200–2003 was limited by time and financial constraints (p. 7) to the monuments published in this volume and does not provide any information regarding the structural or stratigraphic connection of the mastabas with the adjacent tombs. Admittedly there may well be none left after the initial early 20th century excavation.

The architectural differences noted with the mudbrick tombs of the Teti cemetery (Saad, 1943) suggest that Kaiemheset and Kaiemsenu belong to a distinct group of tombs sharing similar features: “large mudbrick superstructure with small chapels oriented N–S, some incorporating elements of stone or wood” (p. 7) For McFarlane, those tombs belong to the northward extension of the private necropolis of Saqqara initiated by the construction of the pyramid complex of Userkaf. In the dialog initiated by Cherpion’s dating the mastaba of Kaiemheset to the 4th Dynasty, Michel Baud (1998: 35) noted, in response to Kanawati’s review (1992: 326), the presence “not far [of brick structures] dating probably to the 3rd Dynasty [...] reused in the course of the 6th Dynasty”. Until the construction sequence of this large area (delimited to the south by the processional alley

leading to the *temenos* of Djoser, the pyramid of Userkaf to the west, and Teti's funerary complex to the north) is firmly established, this issue will not be concluded to the satisfaction of all parties.

Nonetheless, the fact is that the complex of Kaiemsenu is securely dated to the late 5th Dynasty. Despite some minor irregularities – a pre-existing wall of tafel bricks north of Sehetepu II's shaft (p. 65), and a wall of tafel brick at the back of the anonymous chapel II (probably a repair) (p. 101) – and additions made to the front of the chapels – room IVB in front of chapel Anonymous I (p. 100), corridor in front of Anonymous II (p. 101)² – the construction of the complex is very homogeneous – the same module of Nile mudbrick is used throughout the complex (p. 65) – indicating that the monument was built within a very short period of time, without any signs of reuse.

The proximity and alignment of the two monuments makes it unlikely that Kaiemheset's mastaba was built much before Kaiemsenu. An interruption of so many generations (from Djedefra for Kaiemheset to Neusera for Kaiemsenu) in the construction sequence of this cemetery between one row and the next is doubtful. Thus, the disposition of the monuments vis-à-vis one another strongly supports McFarlane's conclusion that the mastabas of Kaiemheset was built at approximately the same time as Kaiemsenu's.

The absence of reference to king Teti is not proof *per se* that these tombs did not belong to officials of this king, who would have been granted a concession to build a tomb in the royal cemetery. In the original publication, the tomb of Kaiemsenu is presented in the section entitled 'Mastabas of the VIth Dynasty'.³ Yet the antecedence of this group of tombs vis-à-vis the Teti cemetery is again established by their overall disposition.

The 3 m wide mud-packed street running north-south in front of Kaiemsenu's complex appears to mark the western limit of the Teti cemetery. As noted (p. 19): "none of the E-W streets in the Teti cemetery north of the pyramid continue west beyond a distinct N-S line". It is most unfortunate that no plan illustrating this description, or showing the relation between the tombs of Kaiemheset and Kaiemsenu and the Teti cemetery is included in the publication. As a matter of fact, but for a schematic plan (Kanawati, 2003: figure 2.24), no comprehensive plan of the work carried out by the ACE in the Teti cemetery has been published.⁴ McFarlane adopts here the construction sequence developed by Kanawati (2003: 142) of a private cemetery "planned as a single project" developing first east-west then north-south along the line of mastaba formed by the complex of Kaiemsenu. It will be interesting to see if Alan Lloyd, who initiated the work in the Teti cemetery almost thirty years ago, confirms this sequence in his upcoming publication of the tomb of Neferseshemtah (Lloyd, forthcoming).

This situation has led to the conclusion that Teti built his pyramid at the edge of a pre-existing cemetery, where the mastabas of Kaiemheset and Kaiemsenu stand. The observation that his pyramid was laid out "on a diagonal line formed by the pyramids of Userkaf, Djoser and Unis" (p. 19) – an alignment also noted for the royal pyramids at Giza and Abusir – would explain Teti's choice of an already densely settled site to build his own tomb.

In conclusion, McFarlane makes a convincing argument showing that the mastabas of Kaiemheset and Kaiemsenu do not integrate in the outline of the Teti cemetery and that, in all likelihood, they predate it. Whether the mastaba of Kaiemheset is exactly contemporary to the tomb of Kaiemsenu (and Neusera-Isesi) remains open to discussion, but a case is made that it was certainly not built long before.

The conception of Kaiemheset's family complex

McFarlane holistic publication of the tombs of Kaiemheset and Kaiemsenu offers new grounds for the discussion of the conception of family funerary complexes. Though found elsewhere, there is no doubt that the decorated wooden door (JE 47749) originally stood in the complex of Kaiemheset (p. 42–44). The connection is secured by the identification of the names and titles of Kaiemheset and his brother Kaipunesut on the door and on material found in the tomb.

The top portion of the door presents a *htp-dj-nswt* formula invoking offering for Senefankh, and his five sons Kaiemheset, Kaipunesut, Memi, Hetepka and Kaikhenet. The central part depicts Kaiemheset, on a large scale. In front of him, a column of text states that he is the one who made 'this' for his father and his brothers, out of his own property, to insure the coming forth of their invocation offering. Behind, a short column indicates that he commissioned the sculptor Itju to make (it). Two lines at the bottom identify Hetepka, depicted on a

² This feature is described but does not figure of any of the plans.

³ According to Firth & Gunn (1926: 31): "The mastaba of Kaiemsenu does not appear to be earlier than the VIth dynasty as he was priest of three of the Pyramids of the Vth dynasty. [...] It is of considerable size, being over 25 meters long, as may slightly precede the mastabas of Kagemni and Mereruka".

⁴ A general view can be generated by combining the area plans from Lloyd *et al.* (1990: pl. 1), and El-Khouli & Kanawati (1984: pl. 1).

small scale by the feet of Kaiemheset, as the brother of the *dt* managing the (funerary) endowment of two aoures of land.

McFarlane offers a new line drawing of the door (pl. 50) meant to supersede Zayed's original publication (1956: 8–10), not cited here. Unfortunately the tracing is incorrect in one place: the last line is opened with a *t* (above the *dj*-sign) while it should read *r*. This inaccuracy is all the more incomprehensible given that the photograph (pl. 15) is perfectly legible. This mistake is significant as it demands a passive reading for the final line: *dj.t(j) n.f m N^crt grgt Hm-df3 3ht st3t 2* “the *grgt* of *Hm-df3* of 2 aoures of land in *N^crt* is given to him.” McFarlane's transliteration and translation do not follow this incorrect tracing – clearly involuntary – and read: “the brother of the funerary estate, the overseer of builders Hetepkai, he has given (*rdj.n.f*) in the nome of Heracleopolis, the foundation of *Hm-df3* (consisting) of two aoures of fields/land” (p. 44).

Two different translations of this statement have previously been offered, which are not mentioned. Grdseloff (1943: 48) reads: “Hetepka, to whom were given ...” (passive relative form with *n.f* as resumptive pronoun), while Moreno–Garcia (1996: 117) adopts: “It was ... Hetepka who gave to him (Kaiemheset)” (active participle). Each translation obviously entails a different interpretation of the deed. Considering existing parallels (Tjenti, Penmeru, see Goedicke, 1970: 122–130, 68–74), Grdseloff's reading seems most appropriate as the *sn-dt* is customarily the recipient of the land providing the goods for the funerary cult of the tomb owner.

The implication of Kaiemheset's dedication is a very interesting case study. What did Kaiemheset do (“I made ‘this’”) to ensure the afterlife sustenance of his family? We know from the text that he commissioned Itju to make the door; but could the dedicatory inscription have a much broader implication and refer to the construction of the monument where his father, his brothers and himself are buried? Over fifty similar dedications written by sons on behalf of their father have been recorded. Rare are those, like Senedjemib Mehi or Djau (Senedjemib: Urk I: 63, 10–65, 9; Djau: Urk I: 145, 5–147, 16), who explicitly state that they built a tomb for their father. But in most cases, the location of the dedications, on a fixed architectural element, implies such filial contribution. This is all the more likely that all the dedications include a reference to the father having already passed away. The comparative analysis of the textual documentation – the dedications – against its archaeological context – the tomb – outlines two main patterns which both involve the construction of family tombs. A son either builds a tomb for himself in which he accommodates a place of burial and cult for his father, or he builds a tomb for his father in which he becomes the subordinate occupant.

McFarlane's detailed publication of the architecture of the complex of Kaiemheset finally clarifies the dynamics behind the construction of this family tomb. Unlike other monuments, this tomb was not planned as a family complex from the start, but grew into one over time. The original mastaba built for Kaiemheset was an independent ‘completed’ monument (p. 23–28). The northern outside wall of this mastaba was built with a slope which establishes without any question that no addition was planned in that area. The construction of the subsequent northern extension which hosts the tombs of Kaipunesut and of another anonymous family member – father or brother – required ‘patching’ the gap between the vertical south wall of the extension and the sloping north wall of Kaiemheset's mastaba with mudbrick specifically “shaped to fit” (p. 52). The bricks used for the construction of Kaiemheset's monument and the extension are of the same size, making and laying, which suggests that the modification brought to the original structure did not take place long thereafter. The addition of a pillared hall, in front of the entrance to Kaiemheset's chapel, using that same brick module (p. 26–27, Kaiemheset stage two) could be contemporary to the extension. The final stage consisted of the construction of a pillared hall in front of the chapel of Kaipunesut (p. 53–54, Kaipunesut stage two) and the opening of a new entrance to Kaiemheset's tomb in the modified façade joining the east walls of both pillared hall (p. 28, Kaiemheset stage 3). This final addition was made with much smaller bricks (pl. 40).

The excavation of the complex remains incomplete. We only have the tombs of three members of this family which, according to the texts carved on the wooden door, counted five brothers and their father. Considering the evidence at hand it appears that the dedication was made *a posteriori*, after the completion of the family complex. Like others at the same time period – for instance Nefer in the Unas causeway (Moussa & Altenmüller, 1971; Quibell & Hayter, 1927: 16–20; Firth & Gunn, 1926: 31–36, 157–166) – Kaiemheset turned his tomb into a family complex. Given the importance given to Senefankh, the father, in the inscription we might have expected his tomb to be located in a prominent position, just to the right of Kaiemheset's, but this is not so. This idiosyncrasy is unparalleled in the analysis of that type of evidence.

As with all ACE reports, the swiftness with which the collated data are being published is greatly appreciated, despite some doubt cast upon the reliability of the drawings. McFarlane's publication of the complexes of Kaiemheset and Kaiemsenu is a significant addition to the corpus of Old Kingdom private tombs made available for further study.

McFarlane, A. 2004. Mastabas at Saqqara. Kaiemheset, Kaipunesut, Kaiemsenu, Sehetepu and others. – Oxford, Aris and Phillips (The Australian Centre for Egyptology Reports 20). 104 pp. ISBN 0-85668-822-3. Price £ 55.00 (paperback).

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